

## **MINUTES**

Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

(Virtual Meeting)

Software: GotoWebinar

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone's Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Somerville Redevelopment Authority was conducted via remote participation.

Present from the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA): Phil Ercolini (Chair), William Gage, Iwona Bonney, Ben Ewen-Campen, Patrick McCormick, and Emily Hedeman. Also present were Eileen McGettigan as Special Counsel, Tom Galligani as Director of Economic Development, and Sunayana Thomas as Senior Economic Development Planner and staff to the SRA.

Phil Ercolini, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Open session commenced. A quorum was present. This meeting was audio recorded.

### **Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting**

- I. Draft January 20, 2021 Minutes
- II. Boynton Yards- DLJ Presentation
- III. Draft SRA-Council MOA

#### **1. Approval of the January 20, 2021 Minutes**

- Comments: Page 2, first sentence eliminate the word "of" next to "any".
- Motion to Approve by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Bill Gage.

Roll Call Vote:  
Iwona Bonney, Yes  
Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes  
Bill Gage, Yes  
Emily Hedeman, Yes  
Patrick McCormick, Yes  
Phil Ercolini, Yes

## **2. Boynton Yards Update**

Mr. John Fenton of DLJ Capital Partners (“DLJ”) provided the Boynton Yards update.

As of January 21, 2021, the Planning Board approved DLJ’s Master Plan. The Master Plan contains four phases, approximately 985,000 square feet of commercial space and 350,000 square feet of residential space with three lab buildings with retail on the first floor. The project will also deliver over an acre of civic space, new roads and sidewalks.

Mr. Fenton stated that minor changes were made to the preliminary Master Plan that was exhibited previously to the SRA; however, the approved Master Plan is substantially similar to and in compliance with the Land Disposition letter agreement between DLJ and the SRA. Open space and civic space did not change from the preliminary Master Plan. The approved Master Plan contains 10% arts and creative enterprise space, and a community center which was not part of the DLJ-SRA letter agreement.

Each of the buildings will be the subject of a site planning approval process. There will be meetings with the Neighborhood Council, the Design Commission, planning staff, and eventually an application will be submitted to the Planning Board for each phase of the development and for each civic space.

Mr. Ercolini asked for a clarification about the mix of the affordable housing units. Mr. Fenton stated that the project will provide 20% affordable units that will include three-bedroom/family units.

Mr. Gage noted that he had commented on the draft environmental impact report submitted to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. He was concerned about the 11,000 s.f. air rights parcel which was not shown as part of the development process. Mr. Fenton stated that a definite use for that parcel has not been determined. It is envisioned to be a civic or community space, possibly a dog park. An abutting property owner currently owns the air rights over that lot. Mr. Gage suggested that the parcel could be given to the City to use as open space.

Mr. McCormick asked what percentage of the civic space will be green open space. Mr. Fenton stated that approximately 85% of the space needs to be permeable and that the final designs will be created with assistance of the Public Space and Urban Forestry (“PSUF”) Department. Mr. McCormick further asked if green roofs were considered. Mr. Fenton said they were discussed at length, and attempts will be made to find locations to utilize green roofs if possible.

Mr. Ewen-Campen noted his public comment made when the project was before the Planning Board. He had requested a Community Benefits Agreement with the Neighborhood Council and was thankful one was undertaken. Mr. Ewen-Campen also expressed a concern that the number of parking spots may attract too many cars which will lead to increased traffic. He also suggested an enhanced connection to the new MBTA Green Line station at Union Square.

Mr. Fenton stated that there will be robust bike accommodations and a mobility management plan. There will also be a shuttle bus service that will connect the site to Sullivan Square and Kendall Square. Furthermore, they will be building a connecting road to the Union Square MBTA station and have invested significantly in the Boynton Yards infrastructure plan.

Ms. Hedeman asked if the housing units will be rentals or condos. Mr. Fenton responded it is likely to be rentals, but no final plan has been made. It was further clarified that the number of floors shown on the presentation slide are the above-grade floors. Ms. Hedeman also suggested that City funds may be used to generate open space.

Mr. Galligani stated that the City’s planners are actively working to maximize open spaces in the City.

Ms. Hedeman commented that there are concerns relating to privately owned public spaces (“POPS”) and that public spaces, including POPS, should be welcoming to all residents of Somerville.

Mr. Fenton stated that it is a priority to ensure that the open spaces are inviting.

Ms. McGettigan stated that the next step is for a Land Disposition Agreement (“LDA”) to be drawn up which must be consistent with the existing letter agreement. The LDA would formally clear the title of one of DLJ’s parcels which formerly belonged to the SRA. Currently, there is a restriction on the parcel which requires that the land be used as a parking lot. The Chair may sign the LDA without an additional vote of the full board if SRA counsel deems that the LDA is consistent with the terms of the letter agreement.

### **3. Union Square Update**

No Updates

#### **4. Assembly Square**

No Updates

#### **5. 90 Washington Update**

Ms. McGettigan stated that the SJC did not allow the Cobble Hill attorney to present much of his argument before beginning to question him. Attorney Masterman's time was mostly devoted to discussing the meaning of the term "demonstration project". The SJC requested legislative history of the term. The legislative history indicates that the term "demonstration project" goes back to the 1950s when the federal government gave grants for demonstration projects.

#### **6. Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Update - SRA & City Council MOA**

Mr. Gage asked if there is a timeframe on the MOA and is the document project specific or a new operating procedure?

Ms. McGettigan said the MOA is written as a new operating procedure, not tied to the Winter Hill Plan. However, it could be adjusted just to address procedure for the Winter Hill Plan.

Mr. Ercolini asked what would happen if it were decided that it would be specific to this project.

Ms. McGettigan suggested that a termination procedure be added.

Mr. Ewen-Campen stated that this MOA appears to explain the relationship as it is. Does it create a new relationship?

Ms. McGettigan said it better defines the role of the City Council Representative on the board. It also allows for two Councilors to sit on a Civic Advisory Committee ("CAC") when there is a parcel disposition under an urban renewal plan. Also, under the law, the SRA does not have to undertake a solicitation process prior to disposing of property in an urban renewal plan; however, the MOA states that a solicitation process will always be undertaken prior to disposing of property.

Mr. Ewen-Campen suggested that all Councilors should receive emails making them aware of SRA meetings and agendas. Mr. Ewen-Campen also stated that each SRA member should have an email address for comments from the public. He also stated that video of SRA meetings should be posted and be easy to find online.

Ms. McGettigan stated that she is not comfortable with emails being sent directly to SRA members; it is not best practice as it could result in violations of the Open Meeting Law. However, there is an SRA alias email which currently exists.

Mr. Galligani stated that videos can be easily posted now that the SRA's meetings are remote. However, when the board returns to in-person meetings, the meetings can only be audio recorded, due to technology limitations at City Hall.

Mr. Ewen-Campen proposed three language suggestions. City Council Representative: He is concerned that the expectation is that the City Council representative will represent the will and view of the Council. He stated that it is not possible to represent the Council as there are 11 very different viewpoints.

**Vote:** To strike the word "represent" from the MOA.

Motion to approve by Ben Ewen-Campen, seconded by Bill Gage.

Roll Call Vote:

Iwona Bonney, No

Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes

Bill Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, No

Patrick McCormick, No

Phil Ercolini, No

The motion fails, 2 in favor, 4 opposed.

Mr. Ewen-Campen stated that there is a section requiring Council to move quickly to fill vacancies. The Council does not have any information about any candidates. Ewen-Campen further stated that perhaps the SRA could give the Council a month's notice before a developer will be selected so that the Council could provide input.

Ms. McGettigan responded that this is why two Councilors are sitting on the CAC. Having the Council provide input to the SRA's selection of a developer politicizes the selection.

**Vote: Accept Draft MOA, authorize sub-committee to negotiate with Council members, and transmit the draft to the City Council.**

Motion to Approve by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Bill Gage.

Roll Call Vote:

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes

Bill Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes

## **7. Public Comment Period**

Councilor Clingan spoke during the public comment period. He thanked the board for its consideration of, and work on, the MOA. He looks forward to discussing the language with his colleagues on the City Council.

No further public comment.

## **8. Adjournment**

Next Meeting Date – March 17, 2021 – 5:30pm - Virtual Meeting

Motion to adjourn by Ben Ewen-Campen, seconded by Iwona Bonney.

Roll Call Vote:

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes

Bill Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes